The Black Cat

March 1896.

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The Black Cat

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Eleanor Stevens' Will.

BY ISABEL SCOTT STONE.

WHEN the following notice appeared in the columns of the daily newspapers, society experienced an absolutely new sensation. People who hadn't known the late Eleanor Stevens immediately began to inquire into the history of the woman whose name was coupled with so singular an announcement. And people who had known Eleanor Stevens forthwith revived long lists of her curious fads and fancies, concluding always with the declaration: "Well, it's just what you might expect from Eleanor Stevens."

> PERSONAL. The rejected suitors of the late Miss Eleanor Stevens may hear something to their advantage by communicating with Willard Pratt, Counsellor at Law, International Trust Building.

Now, Eleanor Stevens had been by no means either the crotchety old maid or the rattle-brained young one that these remarks might imply. On the contrary, she had been a rarely charming and gifted young woman, well born, well bred, the heiress to an enormous fortune, in fact, the possessor of beauty, brains, and money, sufficient to equip half a dozen so-called society belles. But in spite of these endowments, or, perhaps, because of them, Eleanor Stevens had been an eccentric, and with every year since her début her eccentricity had become more marked. At times, for example, she would dance and golf, pour at teas, and talk

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small talk to eligible young men with a persistency and success that made her for the time the sun of society's solar system. Then, suddenly, and with no excuse whatever, she would withdraw into herself, refuse all invitations, and spend a month or more in studying Buddhism or in inquiring into the condition of the poor in great cities. As to her suitors, the most remarkable reports had existed concerning Miss Stevens' treatment of those gentlemen. It had been said by some that each in turn underwent a period of suspense hung, like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and heaven, at the end of which time he was always lowered to the former element by Miss Stevens' unqualified refusal. Certain malicious rivals had even claimed that at times these proposals were so numerous that Miss Stevens used printed forms of rejection, — like those sent by publishers with unavailable manuscript, — with space left blank for the name and date. There were others who had declared that her drawing-room was always as crowded with suitors as a fashionable doctor's waiting-room with patients. Occasionally, it had occurred to an exceptionally keen-witted person to connect the girl's periods of self-exile with her reputed refusal of some specially manly lover. But each of these reports was, after all, founded only on surmise. For it was cited as a crowning instance of Miss Stevens' eccentricity that she had looked upon the subject of love and marriage with an old-fashioned romanticism, and that while she had never found her special ideal, she yet believed too thoroughly in the honor of her would-be lovers ever to betray their confidence. In the end, society had concluded to accept the girl's vagaries as simply "Eleanor Stevens' way." And this formula had been made to cover a multitude of oddities, ranging from the wearing of high crowns when low ones were the fashion, to Miss Stevens' sudden and mysterious departure for Europe exactly two days after she had taken apartments for the summer with a party of friends at a watering-place hotel. Indeed, when, six months after her abrupt departure, the notice came of the young heiress' sudden death — unattended except by her maid and companion — in some obscure village in the Black Forest, even her friends could find no phrase that so well expressed their shocked surprise as: "Well, that was just like Eleanor Stevens. She couldn't even die like other people."

And now, following upon the news of her strange death, had appeared this still stranger notice.

Eleanor Stevens' rejected suitors! Who were they? Would they present themselves according to directions? What were the advantages they would gain by so doing?

To the last of these questions the public had not long to wait for an answer. Three days after the extraordinary "personal" had made its appearance, the announcement was made that Eleanor Stevens had left a will, and that this will had been probated. Before this news was twelve hours old, the sensation caused by the advertisement was completely overshadowed by that produced by the following clause with which it was discovered the will ended:

"To each one of my rejected suitors I give and bequeath twenty-five thousand dollars, to be paid subject to certain sealed conditions, exactly one year from my death, in the library of my residence in Beechwood Street, Philadelphia."

Decidedly, society had never found a more tantalizing subject for gossip than was furnished by this mysterious will. The latest scandal, the approaching wedding at St. Peter's, and the forthcoming private ball all faded into nothingness beside this all-absorbing sensation. In the newspapers long accounts of the dead woman's life and character, of her house and gowns, ways of wearing her hair, and such light-throwing investigations were published daily. A popular preacher referred to the subject veiledly in his Sunday night sermon. Men who had never seen Eleanor Stevens quizzed one another about the wide swath they would cut when they claimed the money due them under her will. While every masculine being, from an office boy to a gray-haired clergyman, that rode up in the elevator in the International Trust Building, where Willard Pratt had his office, was regarded as a possible applicant, bent on further informing himself concerning the curious legacy's conditions. One man only knew the facts in the case, and that was Eleanor Stevens' lawyer, Willard Pratt; but from him neither hints, nor bribes, nor open question could drag a syllable. As for Mr. Pratt's office boy, he reaped a harvest of retainers for worthless tips on the "approaching race."

In the end, people decided that the legacy had some connection with the late Miss Stevens' romantic ideas concerning her rejected suitors; and accepted, grudgingly, the necessity of awaiting the slow coming and going of three hundred and sixty-five days before they could find out who those suitors had been.

Meantime, Willard Pratt, counsellor-at-law, was deriving from the administration of Miss Stevens' will the keenest enjoyment of his long and varied legal career. Being a shrewd reader of character, and possessed of a large fund of humor, he had vastly enjoyed being interviewed by the claimants or the claimants' friends, and, though they had got nothing out of him, he had, on the other hand, got a great deal out of them. As one after another left him the keen jurist invariably chuckled to himself:

"Smart girl to refuse him. He was after the money, that's plain. But what in the name of all that's holy made her give him twenty-five thousand now?"

But his enjoyment reached its culminating point when, just one week before the day appointed for the settlement of the will, society was again startled by this notice in the daily papers:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

The rejected suitors of Miss Eleanor Stevens are requested to meet at her late residence on Beechwood Street, Philadelphia, on Monday, the 21st inst., at ten o'clock A. M., with reference to the legacies due them under her will. WILLARD PRATT, *Executor*.

"I think that will reawaken popular interest," said the old lawyer dryly.

And so it did. Seven days later, when the hour appointed for the reception of Miss Stevens' rejected suitors drew near, the street in the vicinity of her late residence was lined with an eager multitude of men and women. From behind the curtains of every window within a block, unseen spectators awaited the morning's developments; while people who would not acknowledge their curiosity by joining the crowd of confessed sight-seers made convenient errands which took them through Beechwood Street at the time appointed for the "show." The only drawback to the anticipated enjoyment was the fear that, after all, the suitors might at the last moment fail to appear.

But no such catastrophe occurred. It is true that as the hour drew near in which they were to stand confessed as members of Miss Eleanor's "army of martyrs" several of the intended claimants had found themselves weakening in their resolve. Those, for instance, who had justified their claim solely on the ground of an admiration felt but never expressed, felt their courage oozing as the ordeal approached. Others, who were burning incense at new shrines, seriously considered renouncing a claim that would decidedly complicate their present prospects. Still others, who were now happily married, hesitated at opening the old wound and endangering their domestic bliss, even for twenty-five thousand dollars; while hardly one but felt some qualms at the thought of openly profiting by an experience that most men hide in the deepest recesses of the heart.

It was a question whether pride or profit would win the day. In the end, however, the almighty dollar had proved its right to that title.

When Mr. Pratt entered the library of Miss Stevens' late residence, at ten o'clock on this eventful morning, he found the room crowded with a body of men clad in mourning garb and solemnly waiting in various stages of uneasiness for the approach of the long-expected moment.

As the lawyer silently took his seat behind a baize-covered table, the troubled faces grew visibly more troubled; and as he produced sundry important-looking documents and laid them on the table, each countenance was stamped with mingled emotions, eager expectancy in many cases being linked with shame and avarice.

"Gentlemen," began the old lawyer, "I must trouble each of you to give me in writing a concise statement of the time, place, and circumstances attending your several offers and rejections, in order that I may have documentary proof that you are entitled to the legacies left you by the terms of Miss Stevens' will.

"Documentary proof!" At those unexpected words the emotion that marked the faces of the strange assembly changed to unmistakable concern. Was this some disagreeable joke? No, the old lawyer waited with unmoved face for the fulfilment of his demand. There was a momentary hesitation. Then, filing

up in due order, the applicants, one by one, seated themselves at the table before the old attorney and wrote the account demanded.

As the last statement was signed, the portières of the library were suddenly drawn back, and a tall, heavily veiled figure advanced slowly into the middle of the room. Then, as she raised her hand and drew back the thick gauze that masked her face, a cry of terror echoed through the house.

The woman was Eleanor Stevens!

"Wait," she commanded. "Don't be alarmed; I am no ghost. The Miss Stevens who died a year ago in the Black Forest was not the Miss Stevens whose loss you are so deeply mourning.

"By a stupid blunder of the peasants with whom I was staying, an exchange of names occurred between myself and an invalid girl whom I had befriended; so that when she died, her death certificate was issued under the name of Eleanor Stevens.

"Some weeks earlier I had been influenced by daily contact with one whose life was fading rapidly away to draw up my will in legal form and to send it home to my lawyer.

"When I left so suddenly for Europe a year and a half ago it was because of a conversation overheard between several of my seeming admirers which changed all my ideas of manly chivalry in affairs of the heart, and which drove me abroad, as I supposed, forever.

"It was that blundering exchange of names that has given me the opportunity of meeting you under these interesting circumstances.

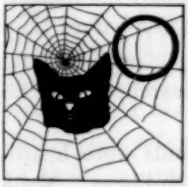
"Now, gentlemen, my will, in which you have shown so deep an interest, stipulates that each of my rejected suitors shall receive twenty-five thousand dollars after my death. That bequest will be carried out to the letter when I am really dead.

"In the meantime I would gladly read your documentary proofs; but, as I have never in all my life rejected but two suitors, and as one of these died six months ago and the other is not here to-day, I shall be obliged to refer you to my lawyer."

And with a sweeping courtesy Miss Stevens withdrew from the room.

"To Let."

BY ALICE TURNER CURTIS.



N one of the streets leading from the park in the center of a town near Boston is a very attractive modern house with a history. It was built for the occupancy of a Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, whose mysterious deaths mark the beginning of this story.

The facts here recorded are just as I heard them. Indeed I was a resident of the town during the period in which these strange occurrences took place, and had a personal acquaintance with the people mentioned.

The Leslies had been married a year, were apparently happy, and were well and favorably known in the town. One morning a neighbor noticed that lights were burning in the Leslie house. He ran up the steps and rang the bell. There was no response, and after a few hours the neighbors decided that something was wrong inside, and that an entrance must be made at once. The front door was accordingly forced open, and as the men went in they could see into the room beyond the hall, the sitting-room. Mr. Leslie was sitting with a paper across his knees, apparently asleep, and on a couch near by lay his wife.

It took but a few moments to ascertain that both had been dead for some hours. Their faces were peaceful and composed; there were no signs of disturbance in the house.

Every possible inquiry was made. No trace of poison or of foul play could be found. Numberless theories were advanced, and the wonder and excitement over the tragic death of the young couple grew daily.

After some months their relatives removed the furnishings, and "To Let" appeared in the cottage windows. The house was immediately taken by a man from Boston, whose family consisted, beside himself, of his wife and two little girls. None of

this family had heard the story of the Leslies, nor did they hear it until they had been in the cottage for some weeks.

One night, after they had occupied the dwelling for over a week, the man of the family was awakened by a sudden scream. His wife awoke at the same moment, and exclaimed: "One of the children must have the nightmare," but just then the two little girls rushed into the room, exclaiming, "What's the matter, mother? What are you screaming about?" Almost before they had finished speaking two more screams in quick succession rang through the house. The place was carefully searched, but no cause for the disturbance could be found.

The next night at about the same hour like sounds were heard. After that Mr. Weston made inquiries of the neighbors. None of them had been disturbed. One suggested that possibly a cat was shut up somewhere in the house and had made the noises heard, but a careful search of the entire premises failed to discover any such commonplace solution of the mysterious sounds.

A week passed without any recurrence of the midnight sounds, when one night Mrs. Weston awoke from a most terrible dream. She dreamed that she was lying upon the couch in the sitting-room. In front of her stood a young man who held a pillow in his hands. "I shall stifle you," he said clearly; "it's no use to struggle." Mrs. Weston dreamed that she tried to scream; that once, twice, three times she endeavored to rise from the couch to push away the pillow, but could not.

From this dream she awoke suddenly, and, as she lay endeavoring to overcome its impression, a gasping shriek, quickly followed by two more, awakened her husband, and again sent the little girls flying in terror to their mother's room.

This time Mrs. Weston held herself responsible for the terrible screams. "I've had a dreadful dream, and I suppose I screamed without knowing it," she said. She had hardly finished this explanation when again came the screams, the last dying away in a stifled moan.

The family was by this time thoroughly terrified. They had heard the story of the Leslies, and without waiting for further experiences in the house they moved at once.

Their story got about the town, with the result that the house

was vacant for a year. Then a family, consisting of an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Walters, and their son, a young man about twenty-five, moved in. The remainder of the story was told me by this son, and I will give it in his own words as nearly as possible:

"I wasn't afraid of any haunted house. My father was deaf, so it would take a reasonably loud scream to wake him, and my mother was a sensible woman. The house just suited us. We got nicely settled in a few weeks, and my elder brother and his wife came out from Boston to make us a visit. The first night they were there I stayed in town for the theater. The train I came out in left a few minutes after eleven, and I reached the house at about a quarter before twelve. I was nearly ready for bed when a shriek like that of a person struggling for his life sounded through the house. I hurried into the hall, and as I did so my brother opened his door. Before either of us could speak a second and a third scream followed. By this time even father's deaf ears had been penetrated, and we all sat up talking the matter over far into the night before we felt like sleep.

"In the end we decided not to mention the occurrence. We thought of several possible explanations of the noise. The next morning we made a careful examination of the house and surroundings. We made inquiries as to late trains, thinking we might have mistaken the shriek of an engine for a human voice; but all our conjectures led to nothing. We could find no satisfactory reason for the disturbance.

"I made inquiries about the Leslies, and found that many people believed that Leslie had stifled his wife, and then taken some subtle poison which left no trace; but there was no evidence to support this theory; no sign of poison had been found, no cause could be given for such an act, and nothing could explain the midnight screams. A week passed quietly, when one night my brother awakened our mother, telling her that his wife was ill. She had awakened from a bad dream almost suffocated, and my mother worked over her for some time before she was restored. She refused to tell her dream, but we were well assured that it was a repetition of Mrs. Weston's. The next morning my brother and his wife went to their home.

"I had one more experience in that house which I shall never forget. My father was to be out one night until midnight at the meeting of a society of which he was a member, and my mother and I decided to wait up for him.

"About eleven o'clock mother lay down on the couch and went to sleep. The room was brightly lighted, and I sat near the couch reading.

"Just as I heard my father come in I was startled by a sudden moan from my mother. I turned quickly toward the couch, and as I did so I saw plainly that the sofa pillow lay upon her face. I snatched it away, and awakened her with some little difficulty.

"Meantime my father had come into the room, and as he entered a scream, terrible in its nearness and intensity, rang out, thrilling us all with a sickening shock. We left the next day."

This finished his story. No explanation of these happenings has ever been given. The Leslies' death remains a mystery, and to explain the Presence that occupied this cottage after their death would be to account for a side of life which we barely touch and cannot comprehend.

The house is still to let.

Of Course — Of Course Not.

BY HARRY M. PECK.

THEY sat, side by side, on a big hearth-rug, gazing into the glowing coals. The one was a young man, of perhaps twenty-eight, and the other an old dog, of perhaps ten. That's not a criticism on the poverty of the English language. It simply shows how much more a dog can "get out," or perhaps "put into," ten years than a man.

They sat there, anyway. Young or old. Young and old. And they gazed into the coals. And the young one blew great clouds of smoke out of a fragrant briarwood at the old one. But the old one did not mind. He was acclimated.

It was in the cozy bachelor apartments of Neil Richards. Neil was a fellow who had succeeded, by dint of presumable study, money, and late nights, in getting through college in a commendable manner, seven years before. Since that time he had been engaged in the financial business. Not exactly as a legitimate broker; nor as a negotiator of loans; nor again as a pawnbroker; but in that pleasanter line which on a business letter-head — if he had owned such a thing — would have been expressed something like this: "Neil Richards, Income Spender, Pleasant Street, Easyville." Anyway, he had been traveling, intermittently, to improve himself, as the phrase goes, since the day he calmly, and with the most approved senioric gravity, tucked a sheepskin under his arm and discarded his cap and gown.

But, after his latest peripatetic streak, he was back again, at last, in New York, in his old rooms, in his favorite seat on the hearth-rug, with his dog beside him, and — in love. The fellows at the club had said for several weeks past, as Richards would excuse himself, get up, and go out about nine o'clock evenings: "Funny about Neil, isn't it? He leaves us every night at nine o'clock, and goes home, and they say he sits down and talks to

that old dog, General, of his till midnight. Guess he must be in love."

And the fellows were right. Neil was hopelessly, fearfully, and miserably in love. Her name was Dorcas — Dorcas Howland; not a particularly pretty name, nor a particularly pretty girl; but a girl with such a wealth of sweetness, tact, common sense, and intelligence that more would have made her a curiosity. Neil had seen her at what is known as a large affair one evening, two months ago; was presented, murmured his platitudes, had a waltz, and immediately put her on a pedestal. He had seen her a few times since, once driving, when he received a bow that kept him absent-minded for a week; and on a few other occasions at the house of a friend, where he had passed some of the shortest quarter hours of his existence — talking to her. And that was as far as he had gone. It isn't exactly strange, then, is it, that when a man almost deifies a girl he has known only two months he should like to sit down on a hearth-rug and talk to an old dog he has known for ten years? A club, and cocktails, and gossip, and late hours are no solace at all, under such circumstances.

But we left them on the hearth-rug, gazing into the coals. "You see, General, it's like this: I'm in love — desperately in love — and Miss Howland doesn't care a rap for me. Probably thinks I am just like all the rest of them, looking for her money, when I'm really not. You understand, General, that I'm not."

The General blinked sympathetically, and looked hard at the coals. Neil threw an arm affectionately around the dog. "You see, I like to tell you these things, old boy, because you never say anything about them." There was silence for a few moments, while Richards meditatively pulled away at his pipe and the dog pensively thought of his puppyhood and its loves. "She's so sweet and dainty," at last continued Neil. "How she would brighten up a home for us, wouldn't she, General?" The dog turned his head, and, looking at his master, reached one great paw over and laid it on Richards's knee. "Shake, is it, old man? Well, here goes. I thought you felt as I did. Now, General, you and I must scheme how to get her." The dog thumped his tail appreciatively on the rug, and they both went to work staring at the coals again.

And so they sat on, — Neil solemnly meditative, the General silently sympathetic. It was a good hour later, when Neil's pipe had burned out, and the dog's head had drowsily fallen against his shoulder, that Richards heard the elevator bell ring, and a moment after the upward rush of the car. Then, as the elevator stopped at his landing, he heard the voice of old Barker, the janitor, saying, "Yes, sir; Mr. Richards is always in nights now, sir. I am sure you will find him still up. Door to the right, sir; and do be careful, sir, not to go to the left, as them's Miss Stevens's apartments, sir, and no one is allowed to disturb her, sir, till I takes her up her cup of tea, and the saucer of milk for the gray cat, sir, at half after — " but the remainder of the old man's loquacity was muffled by the sound of voices.

"Some of the boys, come to drag me out on one of their infernal midnight romps, I suppose," said Richards to himself, with a discontented sigh. "They did that only three nights ago. Why can't they let a poor devil smoke his pipe in peace?" Then, as footsteps approached the door, he arose and surveyed himself in a long mirror at the end of the room. He did not look very presentable, he admitted. His hair was mussed, his clothes were full of tobacco ashes, and he hadn't, when he sat down, even taken the trouble to don a lounging jacket; hence was in his shirt-sleeves. "But who cares?" remarked Richards to himself. "If these stupid night hawks will come here at such an hour, they will have to take things as they find them. Suppose they will have something to drink, however." As he turned to the cabinet set in the side of the room, with his back to the door, and reached for decanters and glasses, a knock sounded, and a cheery voice shouted, "O Neil, I say, Neil, I'm coming in."

"Come in, you infernal rounder, if you must," was the reply. "Bring them all in; you are never alone. You and your gang are, without exception, the most unexcelled set of thoughtless, reveling peace-disturbers I know of. You fellows have been at this thing for ten years," continued Neil; "you know you have, Bob" (still busy with the decanters). "Don't you ever intend letting up? Why don't you fellows say something? This is no monologue."

By this time Richards had succeeded in extricating the trouble-

some decanters from the mass of bottles and glasses, and, turning around, faced the door. To his amazement, instead of the crowd of merry faces he had expected to see peering in at him, he saw only two. One was that of Bob Cutting, his chum, and the other — was that — of Miss Dorcas Howland! The door was wide open. She stood a little in front. Cutting was in the doorway. The gleam from the dying coals and the ruddy reflection from a lamp with a big red shade over in the corner brought out every detail of her face and figure.

And Neil stood, with a decanter in each hand, coatless, and mussed, and speechless. The silence did not last long, however. Miss Howland smiled, bowed sweetly to Neil, and stepped into the room. "Good-evening, Mr. Richards," she said, and held out her hand. Neil managed, in a dazed sort of a way, to set down the decanter that was in his right hand without breaking it, and accepted the proffered hand. Bob Cutting looked on and smiled. "Too astounded to speak, Mr. Richards," remarked the young woman. "Well, an explanation certainly is due you. Then you may not think me so utterly indiscreet as appearances would seem to warrant. Mr. Cutting, will you kindly try to put matters straight, and, at the same time, assure Mr. Richards that we are his guests? His accent, as I recollect it, is a pleasing one. For 'this is no monologue,' you know," and she smiled pleasantly at Neil.

"Yes," broke in Cutting, as Miss Howland paused, "you see, Neil, it's like this. It does look funny, I admit; but I was walking home with Dorcas — er — Miss Howland, from some working girls' club she engineers, and we were chatting about picturesque bachelor apartments, or, rather, I was describing some of them to her that I know the best, and I struck yours. I think I must have grown very eloquent in my description, for Miss Howland insisted that she must see these famous apartments, of which, by the way, all the girls have heard. Knowing it would be all right, as far as you were concerned, I proposed we come over to-night and make you a call, though" — as he looked ruefully around the room — "I really didn't think she'd come."

Neil, during the recital, had quite recovered himself, and privately decided that if a man and a girl were willing to take

the social risk he surely could meet them half way. So he calmly placed the other decanter on a table, and, turning to them, remarked, "I am very glad to see you. This is a little bit out of the ordinary, but the unexpected is quite often the pleasantest. Won't you sit down, Miss Howland? I am extremely sorry that your visit to my den couldn't have been made under more favorable circumstances; at one of my little teas, for instance. Under other than the present circumstances I should feel that an apology was due you for my personal appearance. I am quite aware that I have no coat on, that my hair is mussed, and that I have a general and virulent attack of the malady bachelor-at-homeness. However, I shan't apologize." And then the democratic Neil pulled up two big armchairs, and, having seen his guests cosily seated before the replenished fire, calmly and coatlessly resumed his place on the hearth-rug beside the General. Miss Howland looked surprised, but said nothing. Then she reached over and patted the silky head of the dog. He took the caress in a dignified sort of way, but nestled closer, if possible, to Richards. "What a handsome fellow," she softly said; "and how much he thinks of his master," she added to herself.

The three chatted away together about bachelor dens, people, and other generalities for some time, when suddenly Miss Howland rose and, turning to Cutting, said: "I wonder if you'd mind granting me one more favor. I wish to have a little talk with Mr. Richards — alone." She paused a moment. "I know it's unconventional, but the rest of this is, also, and I know you won't take it amiss, will you?"

"Not at all," Cutting answered. "Suppose I manipulate the ivories while you have your talk. Don't feel that it must be abbreviated on my account; but when you get through, why, do as they do in the plays, ring for me, and, like the footman, I'll appear. Is it feasible?"

"Quite so, thank you," answered the girl; "it's so good of you." And, with a pipe in one hand and a tobacco jar in the other, Bob vanished through the portieres; and a moment later the click of billiard balls announced that he had found occupation.

The girl turned to Richards. He had risen with Cutting and

had now donned a Japanese smoking-jacket, in which, somehow, he felt better equipped for his strange tête-à-tête. As his eyes sought hers she looked him frankly in the face, and simply asked: "Mr. Richards, what do you think of me?" Richards was silent for a moment, and then, with his eyes on the dog at his feet, said: "Shall I tell you frankly?"

"Yes, please do," answered the girl.

He looked up. "I think you have lots of courage, are a bit injudicious, and, of course, did not come here without reasons."

She smiled. "You are frank, but don't you think it rude to assume the role of inquisitor in your first remark?"

"But you asked me, didn't you?" he gently replied.

"Yes, I suppose so," she said.

She stood absently looking down at shaggy General sleeping peacefully on the hearth-rug. Richards watched her a minute, and then, stepping forward, said softly, "Please sit down, Miss Howland, and then you can tell me as much as you wish."

A grateful look flashed into her face, as she took the big chair he offered her, and sank into it a little wearily. Leaning back, she scrutinized the well-cut, thoughtful face of the man. He had taken his place beside the dog again, and as he sat staring at the coals in the flickering firelight he seemed even handsomer than ever.

She looked at him a moment, and, without moving, said: "Mr. Richards, I've come here to-night on a queer mission. I wish advice. I wish to tell you something about myself, and then I want you to advise me as to what you think I ought to do. I have come to you under circumstances peculiar, to say the least, for these reasons: First, because what I have seen of you has led me to think you honest, frank, and sincere; second, because your friends assure me I am right. This has led me to believe you will be willing to overlook what might be construed as unwomanly, and, in addition, will be willing to help me in trouble. Am I right?" she hesitatingly asked.

"Yes, Miss Howland, you are," he replied; "people who know anything about you could not misinterpret your actions. Don't think circumstances affect me; but just tell me plainly what I can do for you."

"I thought you would take it so," she said in a tone of relief. "And now I'll tell you what I wish to, and pray don't regard it as a girl's whim, — as a peculiar girl's whim, — but simply try to assume the role of a willing listener and an impartial adviser. You see," she continued, "I have no one to go to. I am alone in the world. My parents are both dead, and I live with an elderly aunt, who is as good to me as any one could be, but with whom I have absolutely nothing in common."

The girl smiled thoughtfully. "She likes her tea and cat, her Goldsmith and Thackeray, early hours, and to be left alone. I am different. She is sixty-eight, and that's the reason, I presume. Besides, she was never married. And now, Mr. Richards, I have come to the place where I hardly know what to say. It's about my marrying. A funny thing to consult you about, isn't it? You see, ever since I was a child it has been taken for granted that when I grew up I should marry a certain individual. My parents both seemed to consider it a settled matter, my aunt the same; and I suppose, as a child, I followed the general example. That man was Bob Cutting. We played together as children, living in adjacent houses, and virtually grew up together. I remember we used to have mock marriage ceremonies, at which he and I always figured as the principals, with some other youngster as the clergyman, and we always looked forward to the time when as 'grown ups' our marriage might be made 'real.' So matters drifted along. The children's play stopped a good many years ago; but Bob has kept coming to see me just the same.

"And now — well, he wishes to carry out in earnest what was begun in play. A few nights ago he asked me to be his wife."

The girl leaned forward, and absently smoothed the General's head, as he lay there watching the coals. Presently she said: —

"Mr. Richards, then, and not till then, did I find I did not love him. But," she added, "I did not tell him so. I said only: 'We've been friends since we were children. Come to me next Sunday night, and I will give you my answer.'"

For a moment she sat without speaking; then she concluded: "Mr. Richards, you are Bob Cutting's dearest friend. He hasn't but one friend like you. No man has; no man can have; no

man wishes more. I come to you and ask you, who know him so well, what shall I do? Shall I tell him Sunday night that I'll marry him, or shall I say 'no'? Is it selfish in a girl placed as I am to think of her own future, or ought I to give it up to him? He has been good to me; so good to me; I like him, but I do not love him."

And then she leaned wearily back in her chair, and fixed her eyes on Richards. He did not look up. He did not seem to realize her presence. She watched him, and he watched the red embers glow, crumble, and fade into ashes. The dog whined in his sleep. Then, finally, Richards raised his head, and quietly said: —

"Miss Howland, I think it would be very wrong for you to marry Bob. As you say, I know him well. He is a fellow with such a wealth of love for those he cares for that if he finds it is not reciprocated he is miserable. Think what a lifetime of it would mean to him. And now, you see, in what I've said so far I've considered only Bob. I think you also ought to consider yourself. Two lives are involved; and why should they both be ruined? You are both young. If I were you I should tell Bob, in the kindest possible way, that I did not love him. He will grieve at first, but I think when he finds out you were not for him he will see that it's for the best, and afterward will thank you. And, as for yourself, Miss Howland, when you've done this, you can say, 'I've done my duty; I've done right.' And some day" — the man hesitated — "and some day perhaps some other good man will come along, and ask you to marry him, and perhaps you'll find you care a great deal for him; and the past, with its Bob, and its trouble," and again he hesitated, "and its visit to Richards and the General will be a ghostly vision, which happiness and sunshine will soon wipe away."

At this point he was interrupted suddenly by the General, who, as though scenting some vague trouble, started up with a sleepy "Wuff!"

The sound relieved the tension of the situation. Both laughed, and Miss Howland, rising, reached out her hand to Richards, who now stood facing her. "Thank you," she said cordially. "You've been very good. You'll return my visit some time, won't you?

And now, suppose we 'ring the bell' for Bob," nodding towards an Oriental gong that hung suspended near the mantel.

Richards took her hand and, holding it a moment, said quietly: "I thank you; I will come. But, before you go, I want to ask you just one question. Don't answer it unless you wish to. You told me that you don't love Bob; is it — is it because there's some one else?"

They say that a man's life, and hopes, and ambitions can be snuffed out by a woman's reply. And they also say that a man's future can be made all sunshine and promise if hope can only enter in. And that sometimes comes from a woman's reply, also.

She waited a moment, and then replied firmly:

"No; there's no one else."

A moment later Cutting joined them in response to Richards' summons. As he stood before the fire, pulling on his gloves, he looked at each good-humoredly, and said: "I'm awfully glad that you have become better acquainted; but I hope you haven't been engaged in the pleasing occupation of damning a mutual friend. I see you've made friends with General, also, Miss Howland," he concluded. For the dog stood beside the girl, watching and waiting for a caress.

"Yes," she replied; "General and I are the best of friends," and she leaned over and softly patted the handsome head. "And General's master and I are going to be, too, are we not, Mr. Richards?"

"Yes, we are going to be — that is, I hope so," Richards said slowly.

The next moment the door closed, and she was gone. And Richard picked up a pipe, and lit it, and, turning to the dog, thoughtfully remarked:

"And so endeth the first lesson."

. . . . . .

Of course it's obvious. Love does not need to be diagramed. And, of course, a year later, when the big brownstone had its awning, and its carpeted steps, and its music, and its flowers, all was quite as it should be. And of course their friends heard the Mendelssohn march, and threw rice, and wished them joy. And Bob Cutting was best man? Of course not. And did the

Mother Grundies shrug their white shoulders, and say: "What a beautiful bride! but I wonder how she could have done it; they say she was engaged to another?" Of course they did. And that is love, and about the way it generally turns out. Of course.

The Marchburn Mystery.

BY A. MAURICE LOW.

AS Walter Brixton, chief of United States secret service agents in New York City, stepped off the Washington Limited in the Jersey City depot, the newsboys were calling, "Extra, extra, all about the murder; extra!" Brixton bought a paper. As he settled himself in the "L" car he read, under flaming head-lines, the following account, written in the short, paragraphic style which usually denotes that "copy" has been prepared in a newspaper office in a rush:

"Shortly after six o'clock this evening, Bridget Martin, one of the cleaners employed in the Empire Building, discovered the dead body of Lawrence Marchburn in his private office.

"The screams of the frightened woman brought to her assistance the janitor and some of the tenants, although nearly all of them had left the building for the day.

"A hasty examination showed that Mr. Marchburn had been shot.

"When found he was sitting at his desk, his head dropped forward and resting on his left arm, his hand clutching the receiver of the telephone with the death grip. This would seem to indicate that Mr. Marchburn had been shot in the very act of using the telephone, which was affixed to his desk. The body was still warm, but life was quite extinct.

"The murder must have been committed within an hour of the time of discovery.

"A small wound just above the heart indicated that death had probably been instantaneous.

"The police were immediately notified, and an officer appeared upon the scene. He questioned the janitor and his assistants, but learned nothing additional to the above facts. A search was

made for the pistol, but it could not be found, which proves conclusively that it is a case of murder and not suicide.

"None of the persons had heard the sound of a pistol shot, but the woman, Martin, said she heard shortly after five o'clock what sounded like the violent slamming of a door. At that time she was on the seventh floor, and paid no attention to the noise. Mr. Marchburn's office was on the eleventh floor.

"At this time the police have not the slightest clue on which to proceed. At the central telephone station no one remembers having been asked to connect 1611 Courtland, which was Marchburn's number. As no record is kept of the thousands of daily calls, the telephone office can throw no light on the murder. There is no known motive for the crime, as Mr. Marchburn was not supposed to have an enemy, and was highly respected in business and social circles. The inquest to-morrow is expected to throw some light upon the awful crime.

"Mr. Marchburn was president of the International Bank Note and Engraving Company, whose offices are on the eleventh story of the Empire Building, their factory being in New Jersey.

"He came to New York about five years ago from the West, and started the Bank Note Company, which has been remarkably successful. He was a member of the Central League, the Cosmopolitan, and the Hudson Bay Clubs.

"Deceased was a director in the Seventeenth National Bank and other financial institutions, and was a member of the Jackson Avenue Presbyterian Church. He leaves a daughter, his only child, and, his wife having died several years ago, the sole heir to his vast wealth, which is estimated at millions."

Like all detectives, Brixton was interested in any story of crime; but just now a case of his own engrossed the larger part of his attention. For some months past the country had been flooded with counterfeit notes, and, although the entire secret service force and the police of all the leading cities had been hunting the counterfeiters, they had made little progress. The bills were so nearly perfect, they so closely copied the genuine article, both as to the work of the engraver and the paper upon which they were printed, that only an expert was able to discriminate between them. People began to be thoroughly alarmed.

Many got rid of their paper money as quickly as possible, and exchanged it for gold and silver so as to avoid risk. The newspapers denounced the Secretary of the Treasury for not being able to capture the criminals.

The newspapers next morning contained long accounts of the murder of Mr. Marchburn; but they were able to add little to the reports printed in the extras of the evening before. The murder of a wealthy business man in practically broad daylight, in a building on one of the most frequented streets of the city, caused a tremendous sensation, and in business circles the tragedy was more eagerly discussed than the course of the market. The coroner's inquest brought out these facts:

Mr. Marchburn had spent the day at the factory, and returned to his office about five o'clock. The clerks had not expected him back that evening, and some of them had left. To his chief clerk he said he had stopped in on his way up town to fetch some papers which he wanted to look over at his house, and that while in the office he would write some personal letters. No one need wait for him, as he would latch the outer door after him. Then Mr. Marchburn threw open his desk, the chief clerk wished him good-evening, and in a few minutes, except for the president, the offices appeared to be vacant.

It was explained to the jury that the company occupied five rooms, all of which opened into the main corridor. Mr. Marchburn's private room was at the extreme end of the suite. The company employed seven clerks, two of them girls. One of the girls and Mr. Marchburn's private secretary had left before the return of that gentleman, and the other clerks testified that no stranger was in any of the rooms when they left. The last persons to leave were John Rogers, the chief clerk, and the cashier, William Harding. Rogers swore that while he was waiting for Harding to close the safe Mr. Marchburn came into the general office from his room, and asked if a certain account had been paid. Both men were positive that nobody could have been secreted in the rooms at that time, and at the close of the short conversation Mr. Marchburn again said "Good-night," and returned to his room. Rogers put down the spring latch and tried the door from the outside. It was safely locked. They walked across the hall

to the elevator, and while waiting for the car met the janitor, who inquired if the offices were empty. Rogers told him that Mr. Marchburn was in his room and would be busy for a short time.

The janitor told a straight enough story. After leaving Rogers and Harding he had worked on the other side of the building, and then went to the first floor. He was on the third story at the time when Bridget Martin's screams alarmed him, and he hastily ran to the elevator and told the conductor to take him upstairs. At that time he did not know whence the outcry proceeded, but as the elevator went rushing up some one shouted that Mr. Marchburn had been hurt. When he reached the eleventh story and entered the company's rooms he found the Martin woman and three or four other persons, tenants of the building. His evidence as to the finding of the body was merely corroborative of that of the other witnesses.

There are four elevators in the Empire Building. The conductor of No. 4 elevator, Richard Wright, testified as follows: "I have been employed only two days at the Empire Building. It is the rule to close down two of the elevators at half past five; at six o'clock the third is closed, and the other half an hour later. I am 'late man' this week. Just as six o'clock was striking and elevator No. 3 was making its last downward trip, the annunciator in my car dropped for the tenth story. I ran my car up and took in a young man. I do not remember to have seen him before. He stepped into the car, and as I pulled the rope to go down I noticed that he had a handkerchief wrapped round his right hand and he was holding it with his left, as though it hurt him. I said to him: 'Have you hurt your hand?' He replied: 'Yes, I squeezed it in the door.'

"I looked at his hand again and noticed that there was blood upon the handerchief, and I said: 'It's bleeding.' The young fellow looked dreadfully scared, and I thought he was going to drop, but he said something I couldn't hear, and as soon as the car stopped he walked away quickly."

This testimony produced a profound sensation, and every eye was turned upon Wright.

"Why did you not mention this circumstance to the police last night?" asked the coroner.

Wright shifted about uneasily and said: "When I heard the screams upstairs and was told that Mr. Marchburn had been murdered I was scared half out of my life and clean forgot all about it until I got home. It was then too late to tell any one, and I thought I would wait until I came here."

"Can you describe this man?" asked a juror.

"He was a young fellow; I should think about twenty-four. I didn't notice his face particularly, except when I told him his hand was bloody, and then I saw how white he looked. I never should have thought much of it if it hadn't been for the murder."

"How was he dressed?"

"He had on a brown overcoat; but I don't remember anything else."

That was all the light Wright could throw upon the affair. Coroner and jurymen plied him with questions; but he could tell them nothing. He did not know the color of the man's eyes, whether he wore a beard, what kind of hat he wore; in fact, he could furnish nothing which would serve as an identification. He thought he might know the man if he were to see him again; but he was not absolutely sure as to that. There was no reason to think that Wright was not telling the truth, and it was almost impossible that he could have committed the murder, but the jury, in rendering their verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown, censured Wright for having remained silent for more than twelve hours, and the coroner privately suggested to the police that they keep an eye upon Wright.

As soon as the verdict had been rendered, Detective Sergeants Johnson and Richardson, who had been detailed by Superintendent of Police Walton to attend the inquest, reported to him for further instructions. They briefly repeated the testimony and especially the startling evidence of Wright. When they had finished the chief said:

"What do you make of it?"

"The man in the brown overcoat is the murderer," said Johnson.

"The man in the brown overcoat had nothing to do with it; but Wright knows a great deal more than he has told," was Richardson's analysis.

Walton looked out of the window a couple of minutes without speaking. "The person who committed the murder," he said, as if he were talking to himself more than to his listeners, and without looking at either, "was expected to call at the office that evening by Marchburn, who came back about the time the clerks were preparing to leave, on purpose to keep his appointment. All the doors were locked. Either the visitor must have had a duplicate key, or else Marchburn left one of the doors open, or they had a private signal. Any one of a dozen persons might have been able to open the door with a duplicate key; but I don't see anything to point in that direction. Marchburn would hardly be likely to leave the door open for his expected visitor, so it is evident the doors were kept locked, and when the prearranged signal was given Marchburn opened the door to his murderer. Who was the murderer and what was the motive? It was not money, because no valuables were taken, and the clerks say that neither papers nor anything else were disturbed. The murder was either the result of a sudden burst of passion, or else it was premeditated, and something forced the murderer to do then what had long been contemplated. There was a very strong motive. Find the motive and you find the —"

"The murderer," interrupted Richardson.

"The murderess," continued the chief as calmly as if he had not heard the interruption.

"A woman?" cried his listeners simultaneously.

"Certainly, a woman; it is a woman's crime. From the time when Rogers and Harding left until the discovery of the body was a scant hour. To avoid all possible risks of interruption, Marchburn did not arrange the interview until after five, so that between that hour and six he was shot. At six he was dead, and the doctor testified he must have been dead between fifteen and thirty minutes when he was called in. So that fixes the time of the shooting between half past five and six. Marchburn expected a woman to call upon him that night, because he would not have made such careful preparations for secrecy if his visitor had been a man. He did not want his clerks to see his caller. The time between her calling and the shooting was too short for them to have quarreled; but it was long enough for her to have

made her demand and to have been refused by Marchburn. Then she shot him."

"But the young man in the brown overcoat?" asked Johnson.

"If the coroner had the slightest sense," sneered the chief, "he would have asked Wright if the 'young man' looked as if 'he' were disguised, and Wright's answer would have shown whether he is merely a thick-skulled idiot or whether he has a hand in this affair. But I'm glad the question was not asked, as the woman will think her disguise has shielded her. But Wright has given himself away by his answers. He says 'the young man' had a handkerchief wrapped around his right hand, and was holding it with his left, as if it hurt him. Isn't that a woman's attitude? A man would have shoved his hand in his pocket and held it there — at any rate, until he was in the street, where no one would have noticed it or paid any attention to him. But the woman doesn't know how to use her pockets; her hand hurts her, and she holds it out in full view, instead of hiding it, as a man would have done. I'll stake my reputation that the young man in the brown overcoat is a woman, and that the woman is the murderer of Mr. Marchburn."

The superintendent rapidly outlined his plans. "I want you," he said to Richardson, "to look up Marchburn's past record in the West. Look for the woman there, or for the chapter in his life in which the woman figures. It's there, although it may be difficult to find. Johnson, you look up his record from the time he came to New York to the day of his death. See if there is any woman entanglement here. Keep your eye upon Wright. I can't quite size that man up. Look for the brown overcoat. Now, Richardson, you'd better start right in, and wire me just as soon as you strike anything."

In a few moments Johnson went back. "There is one thing I don't understand," he said. "Why did the woman get in the elevator at the tenth instead of the eleventh story?"

"Easy enough to explain, and another indication that we are dealing with a woman and not a man. When she left the office her natural impulse was to walk down the stairs, to avoid meeting any one, instead of courting observation, as a man would have done

under the circumstances. She walked down one flight; she heard the cleaners moving about and dreaded meeting them, and rang for the elevator as being less dangerous. Remember we are dealing with a woman of no ordinary caliber,—one who is not a seasoned criminal, and who thinks quickly."

From Johnson's report next morning the superintendent learned that Marchburn had moved to New York from the West five years before his murder; that his only child, Lucille, was twenty years old; that father and daughter were very much attached to one another. Marchburn's tastes were all domestic; he seldom stayed out late at night, unless in company with his daughter; he was a regular church attendant, and contributed liberally to its support and to charities. His business was extremely profitable, his fortune being considered very large.

Walton read the report through and felt annoyed. It was not what he wanted. He felt that he was right in charging a woman with the crime; but how was he to find a woman who left no traces behind her? Besides, the papers were growing impatient, clamoring for an arrest, and indulging in satirical flings at the impotence of the police. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. "I ought to have thought of that before," he said to himself. "Rogers or Harding might know," and the superintendent, once more the cold, impassive man of affairs, walked quietly out of his office.

Superintendent Walton went briskly down town, thinking deeply as he walked, and yet noticing everything that went on around him. As he turned the corner of Silver Lane his eye fell upon a portly, well-groomed man who was walking in front of him. Walton was noted for never forgetting a man or woman he had once known, and there was something about this man which seemed familiar. Quickening his pace a little, the detective pushed ahead until he came opposite a money-changer's window, and appeared to be intently gazing at the piles of gold and silver; but out of the corner of one of his eyes he was carefully watching for the man whom he hoped would soon pass. The superintendent looked up and saw a well-preserved man of about sixty, with florid complexion and carefully trimmed whiskers. He looked like any one of hundreds of prosperous business men. Still trying

to fit the face to a name, Walton followed the man into Wall Street, and as he passed the sub-treasury he saw Brixton coming down the steps. The sight of the government agent was like a flash in the dark, and the object he was groping for was instantly made plain. The superintendent determined to take desperate chances. "By gad," he muttered, "I'll risk it. If he's the man his voice will give him away." Quickening his walk, he stepped up to the man, and, tapping him on the shoulder, said very quietly:

"I want you, John Marsh."

With perfect composure he began, "Excuse me, sir, I do not know you — " but in the first three words his deep voice broke into a theatrical falsetto.

Walton smiled triumphantly. "Perhaps not; but I know you, Marsh," he said, with his hand still on the man's arm.

"This is the second time you have called me by that name. My name is not Marsh. Pardon me if I say good-morning," said the other in perfectly modulated tones, and made a movement as if to continue on his way.

But Walton was not to be shaken off so lightly. "Wait a minute," he said, and his voice was as pleasant and his manner as polite as that of the man whom he was addressing. "Perhaps when I tell you that I am Superintendent of Police Walton, who was chief of the detective bureau when we last met, you may remember me."

"My dear sir, this is incomprehensible. I never had the pleasure of meeting you before, and, as I have to attend a very important meeting of the directors of my bank I must beg to be excused. If you really are the chief of police, I think, instead of wasting your time with reputable business men, you could better afford to devote a little of your leisure to finding the murderer of my dear old friend, Lawrence Marchburn."

"You were acquainted with Mr. Marchburn?"

"Sir, I decline to submit to this impertinence any longer. If you attempt to stop me further I shall call an officer."

"I think not," said Walton, with a smile. "You are going with me to headquarters, or I will accompany you to your bank; which do you prefer?"

"In two minutes I could show you what a fool you are making

of yourself; but I prefer to teach you a lesson. I submit to this indignity in the interest of good government."

"All right, Marsh; I see you are the same old Chesterfield, — just as smooth as ever. You've no objection if we ride, I suppose?" and Walton hailed a passing cab. As they jogged up town both men remained silent. Turning a corner, the cab gave a sudden lurch, the superintendent's hand in some mysterious manner caught in his prisoner's whiskers, and they came away from his face. The two men looked one another squarely in the eye. Marsh was the first to speak. "You're a nervy one, superintendent," he said. "What do you want me for? I'm living straight."

"I'm glad to hear it, but I want to have a quiet little talk with you; besides, I heard you were dead."

Marsh smiled. The loss of his whiskers showed him to be a man of about forty, with a firm jaw, a keen blue eye, and a high forehead. "I wish to God I was dead," he said. "When a man tries to live straight he gets snagged and is disgraced."

The cab drew up at the big building on Mulberry Street, and the superintendent, pushing his prisoner before him, led the way to his private room. "Now, Marsh, you say you have been living straight. Prove it and I'll release you."

The man eyed his captor sullenly. "Not till I've seen a lawyer," he said.

Walton touched an electric button. "Lock this man up," he said to the officer who appeared. As Marsh was led away the chief pushed another button. "Bring me," he said to the messenger, "Convictions, letter M, '84."

Hastily turning the pages, Walton read: "Marsh, John, alias Gentleman John, generally known as Chesterfield, because of his manners and politeness, born at Sodaville, Mich. All round crook; specialty, counterfeiting United States notes. One of the most dangerous men in his line. Convicted of counterfeiting and sentenced to Albany for five years in 1870; sent to Jackson, Mich., for three years for forgery in 1878; last conviction, Joliet, counterfeiting, 1884, five years. See page 756." Turning to the page indicated, Walton read: "Escaped from Joliet and committed suicide."

"So he didn't commit suicide," mused the chief. "Well, I always had my doubts about it. I have an idea he had a hand in this counterfeiting business, and if that's so it's a pretty good morning's work — almost as good as finding the Marchburn woman. I had better let Brixton know about this; it may give him a pointer."

A clerk brought in a telegram and handed it to the superintendent. Walton read:

"SODAVILLE, MICH., Jan. 24.— Can you mail me at once portrait of Chesterfield Marsh, escaped Joliet, and committed suicide about 1884? "RICHARDSON."

"By Jove," said the superintendent, "that's curious. I wonder what he's struck now. Well, I guess I'll hang onto Chesterfield for a few days, anyway." Then he telephoned to Brixton, who was now working night and day on the counterfeit money case, which divided public attention with the Marchburn mystery. To the police these cases had proved two of the most remarkable criminal problems they had ever been called upon to solve. Congress had added to the excitement by adopting the recommendation of the Secretary of the Treasury and offering a reward of fifty thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the counterfeiters.

Brixton came in dejectedly in answer to the summons. To Walton, who was an old friend, he admitted that he was beaten.

"Brace up, old man," said Walton; "I've got something good for you," and he at once told him of the arrest of Marsh and Richardson's telegram.

A gleam of excitement blazed from the secret service man's eyes. He jumped from his chair and paced the room a couple of times before he could control himself; then, leaning over his friend's desk, he talked rapidly. "By jove, Walton, you've got our man. There is only one man in the country who could have done the job, and that's Marsh. I have thought about him a dozen times since I've been at work on the case, but always supposed him to be dead. What a confounded idiot I am not to have

investigated that suicide story; yet I never had reason to doubt it."

Both men felt certain that they were at last hot on the right trail, and that Marsh was still engaged in his old business of counterfeiting. While discussing the next move to be made Brixton suddenly said: "What does Richardson's telegram mean?"

The words produced a peculiar effect upon Walton, which was reflected in Brixton's face. Both men scrutinized each other for a brief space of time without speaking. It was as if they were grappling with the same thought, and yet both were afraid to frame in words what was passing through their minds. It was Walton who at last broke the silence and in a nervous sort of way said: —

"That is absurd."

"What is?"

"What you are thinking about."

It was curious that neither man had openly expressed his thoughts, and yet each knew what was in the other's mind just as well as if the words had been uttered.

"I don't know about that. Of course it looks ridiculous to commence with, but not any more so than that West Virginia case."

"I don't remember that," said Walton.

"It was one of my most interesting jobs. For months we had been trying to break up a gang of counterfeiters working in West Virginia, and had failed, just as in the present instance. The thing looked pretty bad, and the merchants of the State were so worked up about the 'queer' that a bill was introduced in the legislature authorizing the governor to employ private detectives, as the government secret service men had shown their incompetence. Before the bill was acted upon we arrested some of the gang, and on the day when the bill came up for action we obtained conclusive evidence that the member of the legislature who introduced the bill was the brains of the gang. I went to the capitol and listened to this man's speech in support of his measure, and after the bill had passed I arrested him and found in his pockets some of the money made by his gang. I sent him over the road."

"You think, then," said Walton, "that Marchburn had some connection with the counterfeiting gang."

"I do."

"Did Marsh murder Marchburn?"

"I don't know about that. I rather think not, because Chesterfield, from what we know about him, is a coward and not the man to kill; but he probably knows who did. There's a connection between the murder and the counterfeiting, and when we pull the right string both knots will come untied."

Walton told his associate of his theory as to the murderer being a woman.

Brixton doubted it. "But it's of no consequence," he said. "Whoever fired the shot was a member of the gang; Marchburn knew him and expected him to call that evening. When we land our man we shall have the murderer and the counterfeiter as well."

How was Marsh to be made to confess? Numerous plans were discussed and rejected. Finally Brixton made this suggestion: "Make Chesterfield understand that he is suspected of the murder and that you have the dots on him. You'll have to sweat him and put him through the third degree. Don't say a word about the counterfeiting. When he's charged with the murder, and things begin to look black, he will squeal to save his neck. He'll give his pals away dead sure and tell all he knows about the counterfeiting. I believe the scheme will work."

Walton agreed with him and proceeded without delay in putting his prisoner through the sweating process. Early in the morning he had read the papers in his cell, and a detective who secretly watched him noticed that he devoured every line printed about the Marchburn murder. Later, the superintendent had him brought to his office and there subjected him to a rigorous cross-examination, and no man knew better than he how to worm the truth out of a criminal. But in Marsh he found more than a match. He either dodged every question or else declined to answer, and neither threats nor promises elicited anything of importance. For more than an hour the man submitted to being worried by his inquisitor, when at last he said:

"Chief, what are you trying to make against me?"

Walton had not taxed him with the murder, as he hoped his prisoner would make some incautious admission which would tell him what he wanted to find out. But Marsh's question seemed to have made the time ripe for the great stroke. Looking him steadily in the eye, the chief said: "For the murder of Lawrence Marchburn."

The prisoner gave a short, nervous laugh. "You're clean off," he said. "I didn't murder him and I had nothing to do with it; but I know the man who did."

Walton had counted upon his declaration producing a confession, or at least some signs of weakness, but this answer astounded him.

The man never flinched. "It's God's truth. I can tell you who committed the murder," he repeated.

"Very well; who did it?"

But Marsh was too old a bird to be caught with chaff. "What do I get if I tell?" he asked.

"I think they would like to have you back in Joliet," the chief answered, "and that means five years to commence with. If you give me the name of the man, and it is proven that you had nothing to do with the murder, I will see that you are not troubled."

Marsh appeared to be thinking deeply. "Shall I have to appear as a witness?" he asked.

"Not unless it is necessary; I won't put you on the stand if I can make the case without you."

"Will you release me as soon as you are satisfied you have the right man?"

"Yes."

"Then arrest Frank Richald, who was Mr. Marchburn's stenographer. He's your man."

"How do you know?"

"I won't tell; but see if I am not right."

Walton ordered Marsh back to his cell, somewhat puzzled by the result of the interview. He did not believe all that Marsh had told him; but the mention of Richald's name indicated that he was getting down to the man's confederates. There was only

one thing to do. The superintendent ordered Johnson to arrest Richald. He took his arrest quietly. Brought before Walton, he said, without waiting to be questioned: "I am innocent; but circumstances are against me."

With a quick, sudden movement, Walton seized hold of the corner of the skirt of Richald's brown overcoat and intently examined a dark spot on the front. "Marchburn's blood," he said tersely.

"I know it," was all the prisoner said.

"Why did you murder him?" asked Walton.

"I did not murder him," he said firmly. "When I reached the office on the night of the murder Mr. Marchburn was lying dead on his desk. I was stunned and horrified. I know now I should have given the alarm; but there were so many strange things in connection with my being there at that hour that I foolishly imagined my safety lay in flight. Some of Mr. Marchburn's blood was on my hand, and I bound my handkerchief around it to escape observation. To avoid meeting any one I started to walk down the stairs; then I was afraid the janitor might see me and think it strange I was walking, so I called the elevator on the floor below our office and rode down."

"What brought you back to the office that evening?" Walton asked.

"That I cannot tell you."

Walton ordered the young man to a cell.

Next day the papers told of the arrest. They also added something about the man who stood charged with the crime. Richald was the son of a once former wealthy New York merchant, whom every one respected. At his death it was found that his estate was badly involved, and all that was left to his widow and his two children was a small estate. On the interest of this Mrs. Richald lived, her son contributing generously of his wages to her support. Two years before the murder Frank had secured a position with the Bank Note Company as Mr. Marchburn's stenographer.

Walton now bent all his energies to securing a fuller confession from his prisoner, to ascertaining what had become of the pistol, and the motive for the crime. His best men were set to work

raking over nearly every hour of Richald's past life. Meanwhile, at the earnest request of Brixton, Walton had decided to hold onto Marsh. Walton was pretty well convinced that, while Marsh did not commit the murder, he had some connection with it, and was not going to let that elusive individual get out of his clutches so long as there was a possibility of proving it. Brixton, on his side, was certain that Marsh was in some way implicated in the counterfeiting, and proposed to keep his eye upon him until he could charge him with the crime or bring it home to some one else. The capture of Marsh seemed like a lucky find.

On the morning of the second day after Richald's appearance in court a carriage drew up in front of the police headquarters, from which a stately looking elderly gentleman and a tall young woman alighted. The gentleman asked to see the superintendent. Walton did not need to look at the card to know his caller, Phineas Yarrow, one of the noted lawyers of the city.

The woman was dressed all in black, and was so slight that she seemed unusually tall when standing alone. She remained closely veiled.

"This young lady is a friend of Mr. Richald's," said the lawyer. "She is very anxious to speak with the prisoner. I am willing to vouch for all she says or does."

Walton shot a keen glance at the girl. "This is rather unusual," he said; "but I will accede to your request, provided, of course, the interview takes place in my presence."

Shortly afterward Richald entered the room, and as he caught sight of the girl he trembled and appeared dazed. For a moment she hesitated, then, with a cry which touched the hearts of the older men, she rapidly crossed the room, threw her arms about the young man's neck, and kissed him passionately.

Whether they were sweetheart and lover, husband and wife, or brother and sister, Walton had no means for knowing; but that the girl played an important part in the case he felt certain. Hurriedly writing a line, he handed it to an officer, and from that time Frank Richald's visitor was under the shadow of the law.

For several minutes the prisoner and his visitor conversed in anxious whispers; then, going to the lawyer, the young woman said: "After you have shown me to the carriage Mr. Richald has

something important to say to you. He will tell you everything."

"Now tell me all," said the lawyer, seating himself by the side of Richald. In eager whispers he told his story. When he had finished the old lawyer paced up and down the room, showing that he was laboring under intense excitement. Stopping suddenly, he said: "You must repeat this to the superintendent, here and now."

Without hesitating, Richald in a firm voice commenced his recital — Yarrow an excited listener, and the superintendent coolly indifferent; but Richald had spoken for only a few moments when Walton's studied indifference gave way and he was soon closely following every word. When the young man had finished the superintendent leaned across his desk, and, clasping his hand, said, "I believe you."

"But there is no time to be lost," he continued. Pushing several of the electric buttons on his desk, he gave his orders to the officers who appeared. Then, turning, he said, "Mr. Yarrow, will you come back at six o'clock this evening? And, Mr. Richald, I shall still have to subject you to my hospitality."

That evening the lawyer once more entered the superintendent's room. He found Walton and Richald busily engaged in conversation, and with them was Brixton. "Now we will get to business," said the superintendent, seating himself at his desk.

Into this company Marsh was called. "In the first place," said the superintendent, "it may be well to explain that Lawrence Marchburn and the prisoner were brothers." Turning to Marsh, he said, "Now tell us your story."

"You know all about me, superintendent," the man commenced, and his eyes were fixed upon Walton, as if he alone were present, "and that I have always been a counterfeiter and a crook. I went crooked very young. My father was a man of considerable means, and my brother Lawrence, who was always of a jealous and grasping disposition, worked upon him so that he refused to have anything to do with me. When he died he left all his money to Lawrence and cut me off without a penny. When I escaped from Joliet I determined to make a last appeal to my brother for help. I reached his house late one night and

he received me in his library. At first he told me never to enter his house again, but during our conversation he changed his mind, and after he had given me food he said:

"'Jack, they tell me you are one of the cleverest counterfeiters in the country.'

"I answered that I believed I had that unenviable reputation.

"'Then here's a scheme. I'm in a pretty tight hole. I have lost a good deal of money lately in speculation, and I have used some belonging to an estate. I am going to start a factory to make counterfeits. I shall have an office in New York and a factory in New Jersey, where we can work undisturbed and everything will look straight. I have money enough to start the factory and buy all the machinery. After a year we can retire with two fortunes and become respectable. If you have any scruples of conscience I'll pay your fare back to Joliet.'

"Of course I consented. There was nothing else I could do."

"I fell in love with and married the daughter of my landlady, and when the baby came she was the happiest woman in the world, and I—" Marsh passed his hand across his face and there was a catch in his voice which showed the struggle he was making to remain calm.

"Well, I was determined to quit the whole business and live straight. I told this to Lawrence, and that I wanted my share of the money he was keeping for me. We had a dispute, but settled it by my agreeing to remain another six months.

"Just before the time was up he went to my wife and told her I was an escaped convict, but that he was trying to get things fixed so I need not fear arrest. He warned her not to allow me to go away, as that would be dangerous. She told me all. Then I resolved to end the matter at once. When he next came to the factory he told me that Richald, his stenographer, had discovered what we were doing, and would give the snap away. He said something must be done to close Richald's mouth until he could close up the factory and clear out. He pretended to be fully as frightened as I was, and I was badly scared, for I did not at last want to be lagged. So I agreed to do whatever he thought best.

"He sent for me to come to New York. It had been arranged

that I should go to his office, knock three times on the door, and if the clerks were all gone my brother would open it. After he had done so, he said, in the most cold-blooded way, that Richald would be there in a quarter of an hour; that we must get him to go to the factory, and on the way there, in a lonely spot, shoot him. He would make it appear that Richald had stolen some bonds, and when his body was found it would look like suicide. I told him that, whatever had been my past life, I would not commit murder. He cursed me for a coward, and said he would have me sent back to jail. I defied and left him."

"Now," said the superintendent, turning to Richald, "will you tell your story?"

"Two years ago," began Richald, who was trembling with excitement, caused by Marsh's recital, "I was engaged as stenographer by Mr. Marchburn, and shortly after became engaged to his daughter, the young lady who was here to-day. A few months ago we were secretly married, and about that time I accidentally overheard a conversation between Mr. Marchburn and his brother, which put me in possession of the colossal plot to swindle the government. I was in doubt as to my duty in the matter, but finally concluded to tell Mr. Marchburn what I knew. He declared that Marsh was the real head of the conspiracy, but, owing to circumstances, he had been unable to extricate himself from his clutches; he would, however, close up the factory as soon as possible. On the day of the murder Mr. Marchburn made an appointment for me at his office. Before leaving for New Jersey he handed me a package which he said contained several thousand dollars in negotiable securities, which he intended to have taken to his bank, but had forgotten to do so, and requested that I bring it back to the office later.

"I was a few minutes late in keeping my appointment, and when I entered Mr. Marchburn's room I found him dead. It flashed across my mind that I might be accused of the murder; that it would be difficult for me to account for the securities, and in explaining my presence in the office I should have to reveal the conspiracy, which, for the sake of Mr. Marchburn's daughter, I was reluctant to do. Yielding to a sudden impulse, I left the office, without raising an alarm. And —"

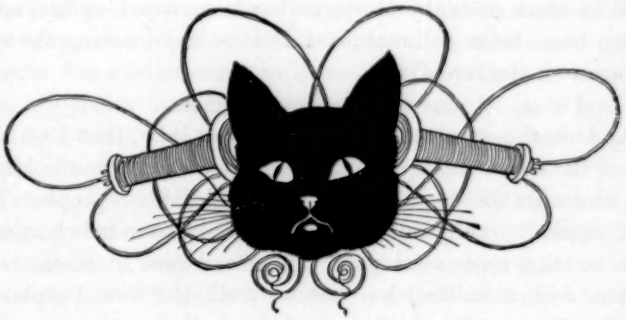
Just then an electric bell rang and the superintendent put his ear to a tube that hung above his chair. As he listened his face flushed. He looked up and, with an accent of conviction that caused Marsh to move uneasily in his chair, exclaimed: "Gentlemen, at last the missing link is at hand!"

The next moment the door was thrown open and an officer ushered in a middle-aged man with a traveling-bag in his hand. Stooping over the superintendent's chair, the officer engaged him in a whispered conversation. As he proceeded, a look of triumph shone in the superintendent's eyes. Swinging around suddenly in his chair toward Marsh, he asked abruptly: "Marsh, did you ever see this man before?" For several moments the prisoner, with eager curiosity, eyed the new-comer from head to foot. Then, turning to the superintendent, he said, with attempted composure, but with that tell-tale falsetto break in his voice, "No, I never saw him —"

"That's the man!" cried the stranger, advancing and pointing excitedly to the prisoner. "I could tell his voice among a million." Then, turning to Walton, he continued breathlessly, "Mr. Superintendent, on the evening of the murder I was in my insurance office in Temple Court. I had just been called to the bedside of my sick wife in Florida and rang up the sleeping-car office in Jersey City to engage a berth. I couldn't get the connection, as the wires were crossed. I rang again and again, but, instead of getting a reply from the central office, I heard a violent quarrel going on between two men. One of them threatened to call the police, and the other shouted, 'If you do that I'll shoot you.' Indeed, I did hear what sounded like the muffled report of a pistol. At that moment I was connected by the central office, and thought no more of the matter until I was seated in the cars an hour later. Then, in recalling the affair, it occurred to me that possibly I had overheard a scrap of a theatrical rehearsal, because the voice of the man who threatened to shoot had a stagy sort of falsetto break in it. And it wasn't until I was overtaken three days ago by New York papers containing full accounts of the Marchburn murder that I knew that I held the clue to the mystery. An hour later I was on the way to New York and came directly here from the train.

"Gentlemen," said the stranger, pausing impressively and pointing to the cowering figure of the prisoner, "that is the man whose voice I heard over the telephone. I heard him speak. I heard him threaten. I heard him rush across the floor. I heard him fire the fatal shot. It was he who murdered Lawrence Marchburn!"

Four months later the jury gave the same verdict.



Their Colonial Villa.

BY CHARLES BARNARD.

The right to dramatize is reserved by the author.

T is very inconvenient to be obliged to live in one place all the time. If we had two houses, we could spend part of the time in one and part of the time in the other."

Young Mrs. Arburton was one of those fortunate brides who are able to set up housekeeping immediately on the return from the wedding journey. Young Mr. Arburton thought it best to build or buy a small house and to furnish and occupy it as soon as possible.

"Of course, my love, I see how important it is that the house should be close down by the river bank near your office, so that you can come home to lunch, and I do so enjoy seeing the steamboats pass on the river."

"Good idea. I must be handy to business."

"And at the same time, you must see, John, that I've always lived at the court end of the town, on the bluff overlooking the river, and near the shops and the homes of the best people. That's why I think it would be so nice if we could have two houses, one down by the river near your office, and one in town, on the Heights and near the churches and all the nice people. We could live every other week in each house."

They were staying at her mother's on the Heights, pending the purchase or erection of the new house. Mrs. Arburton had advanced this happy thought of having two homes at the breakfast table. The idea pleased her mother greatly, and she remarked to her son-in-law that, in her opinion, it was an excellent arrangement. She would gladly live in the uptown house and take care of it while they were spending the week in the other house down by the river.

"My love, we must do it. We never need move anything, for

you could keep a suit of clothes in each house. I'm sure I shall never be happy to live down on the riverside. There's really nobody living there, and still I never, never can be happy if you are not able to come home to lunch."

Young Mr. Arburton quite agreed with his wife and her mother. It would be very desirable to live on the bluff, two hundred feet above the river, and very desirable to live immediately below, down by the boat landing and near the office. It would be very convenient to live in two places at the same time. How to do it was the problem.

Immediately after breakfast young Mr. Arburton started off to business. To reach the lower level of the city, where his office and his great lumber yards stood close by the river, and almost immediately under the lofty bluff on which the new or upper town was built, he was obliged to take a trolley car that slid swiftly down a long iron viaduct or inclined plane. There had been at one time, before the days of the trolley, a more direct, but much slower method of reaching the lower town. This was a sort of huge hoist or elevator, upon which the horse-cars were slowly dragged up and down by means of a cable. At present, this route was seldom used, as it was, in the opinion of the general public, altogether too dilatory transit.

Business was quiet that day, and Mr. Arburton had ample opportunity to consider the problem of keeping house in two places at the same time. He felt sure he must gratify his wife's natural desire to live in town, and he was equally sure he must reside in the immediate neighborhood of his yard and its great interests. It was very like the ancient question as to what would happen if a body, moving with perfectly irresistible momentum, were to meet a perfectly immovable body.

He returned home that night quite radiant. He had solved the question.

"It is all right, my love. It can be done."

"Oh! I felt sure you would see that my idea was admirable. Which house shall you build first— the one on the Heights or the house down by the river?"

"Both can be built at the same time."

"Well, dear, of course, you see the house up here in this

fashionable quarter must be much larger and nicer than the house down by those horrid lumber yards. I shan't mind if the lower house is a plain little box. No one will ever call there, and any simple, inexpensive, wooden cottage will answer. Besides, while we are staying down there I shall not receive at all, and I shall have my cards marked with our uptown address."

"Very well," remarked Mr. Arburton; "I'll see the architect. I dare say it can be fixed."

Mrs. Arburton and her mother were delighted, and when Mr. Arburton suggested that he wished the new house —

"You mean the new houses, dear."

"We'll waive that — it's only a detail — our future domiciles are to be a surprise."

"How lovely in you, dear. You mean you intend to build and furnish them complete without letting me see them?"

"That's about the idea. Leave it all to me."

"Then, my love, mother and I will visit Aunt Sarah in New York for a month."

Mr. Arburton was hardly prepared for this. To lose his young wife for two months was not a wholly pleasant prospect. However, he expressed himself as resigned; for he would be very busy building and furnishing the new house.

"You mean our new houses, dear. I declare it is an inspiration. We can spend every other week in society and have the other week to rest in peace and be by ourselves, quite out of the world."

The next day young Mrs. Arburton and her mother started for New York, and young Mr. Arburton went to the office of the defunct horse railroad company to see about a house lot, it being reported that they had real estate to sell — cheap.

Thirty-two days later young Mrs. Arburton and her mother returned. It was dark when they arrived, and of course they went at once to their former home. Naturally the return of the young wife had a most happy effect upon the young husband. He was lively, was merry, and seemed to be immensely amused over the prospect of moving at once into the new house.

"Is it all done?" cried both ladies, "and so soon?"

"Oh, it don't take long to knock up a house in these days. We can move in to-night. Everything is ready for you."

"Which house shall we live in first?"

"Take your choice."

"Then I'll spend the first week in the uptown house."

"All right. I thought so. As soon as you have had supper we'll go over there."

"Is it far from here?"

"No. Only a short walk. I thought you might like to be near your mother."

"My love, you are an angel!"

This remark clearly indicated an unstable frame of mind, and further reports of the conversation may be cheerfully omitted.

About nine o'clock the young couple started, satchels in hand, to take possession of their new home on the Heights. Mrs. Arburton was charmed. It was just what she wanted, a pretty two-story colonial villa at the end of a broad avenue, and close to the edge of the bluff overlooking the river. The parlor was small, but exquisite, the dining-room cozy, the kitchen perfection.

"Oh, and the view from the chamber window! Isn't it grand? Why, the house must be on the very edge of the bluff. My love, you have made me perfectly happy. It is such a pretty house, and right in the very best neighborhood."

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, Mr. Arburton remarked that he would come home to lunch.

"Oh, no, dear. I wouldn't think of it. It's too far to come way up here just for lunch. I'll put up a little basket for you."

"It will not take me two minutes to run over here from the office. I'll come home at noon."

This he said as they stood at the kitchen door.

"What on earth are you talking about — "

She would have said more, but just at that moment her husband opened the back door and stepped out into the dusty road that led to his lumber yard. Mrs. Arburton stood by the door, looking up and down the commonplace road, at the towering piles of lumber across the way, at the tall stacks of a passing steamboat, just visible over the lumber heaps.

She kissed her husband in a mechanical way, and then closed the door and went to her chamber and sat down by the window. Clearly this was the lower town. There had been some mistake.

She finished her morning household duties and dressed to go out. Leaving the house by the most convenient way, she crossed the street, and, turning back, looked at the house. It was a plain, three-story wooden house, and in every way suitable for such a commonplace business neighborhood.

"I must have been dreaming about that colonial villa. I'll go and call on mother."

She took the trolley car up the great incline to the upper town and went to her mother's house. The moment she arrived her mother began to ask about the new house.

"Oh, it's just a plain, three-story, wooden affair down by the lumber yard."

"I thought you were to occupy the uptown house first."

"Yes, I thought so, too; but we stayed last night in the lower town."

Promptly at noon, just as the big whistle roared its hoarse summons to rest, Mrs. Arburton returned to her humble dwelling in the lower town. Lunch was served at once, and then her husband returned to business, leaving his wife alone in the new house. She explored it thoroughly, and felt sure that the parlor and dining-room were the same as she had dreamed about the night before. At six o'clock Mr. Arburton returned to dinner, and after that he proposed that they make a few calls on friends in the upper town.

"Oh, no, not to-night. It's too far and we shall be so late getting back again."

"Nonsense, my dear. Put on your things and I'll be ready in two minutes."

Five minutes later young Mrs. Arburton appeared arrayed in her best.

"I suppose the nearest way is to go out the back door."

"What's the use of a front door if we do not use it?" said her husband. So saying, he opened the front door and led her out into the brilliantly lighted avenue in the upper town.

Mrs. Arburton was perplexed. She took her husband's arm and walked on for a few steps in silence. Then she stopped and looked back at the house. It was the colonial villa of her dream. Was it a dream? She wanted to ask questions, but wisely said

nothing. The young couple spent the evening in calling, and then returned to their home.

Early the next morning Mrs. Arburton drew up the curtains of her room and looked out. There, far below, were the river and the lower town. It was not a dream.

Then for a week nothing in particular happened. Mrs. Arburton was entirely happy in her charming colonial villa. Her mother called and admired everything.

"I suppose next week you will bury yourselves in the lower town. Of course your other house cannot be equal to this lovely place."

"I don't know, I'm sure. I haven't seen it yet."

"Why, my child, you told me it was a plain three-story affair. You said you stayed there that first night."

"Did I? I must have been dreaming."

The next morning young Mrs. Arburton began to wonder if her mind had given way. She was awakened by the hoarse boom of the lumber yard whistle. She drew up her curtain and pulled it down again quickly. The street was full of teams. She pinched her arm. She looked at the mantel clock. No; she was awake. Being a wise woman, she said nothing, and after breakfast she bade her husband good-by at the back door.

"I'll run over to lunch, dear."

"Very well, Mr. Arburton."

He looked at her with a peculiar smile.

"What's the matter, love? Are you offended?"

"Oh, dear, no! I'm a little — a little confused, that's all. I'll go and call on mother. I'll feel better — for a walk."

"Yes, do. Take the trolley back to town."

She did, and the moment she reached the broad avenues of the upper city she left the car and stood irresolute on the sidewalk.

"I wish I had been more observing. Let me see. There was a row of trees on each side, and the houses were all of Milwaukee brick."

She wandered up and down several streets and avenues looking for the colonial villa.

"It was so stupid in me not to know the street and number of our own house. If I knew that I could ask a policeman. I

declare, I was never so turned round in my life. This looks like the neighborhood — and yet — "

She gave it up in despair and took the trolley back to her home in the lower town. Then for several days nothing happened. Mrs. Arburton tried to be happy and failed miserably. Her husband, of course, observed it, and said at the dinner table:

"My love, I fear you do not enjoy being down here among these lumber yards and shops. After dinner we'll go up town."

She was delighted. When she reached the Heights she would ask him to take her to the other house. Immediately after dinner she went to her room to put on her hat. When she came down again she found her husband calmly reading in the drawing-room.

"I thought we were going to the Heights, dear."

He looked up in some surprise, and, instead of replying, asked if she wished to go out.

"Yes. I do. I—I want to go to mother's."

"Certainly, my love. I'll go with you."

A moment later he was ready, and calmly opened the front door and led her out into the broad, familiar avenue in the upper town.

She stood bewildered on the stoop, and looked at the street, at the lemon-colored houses opposite, and at the colonial villa behind her.

"What are you waiting for, dear?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just wondering where we live."

"Why, how absent you are, dear. This is our uptown house."

It was all right. The other house was the dream. They spent a pleasant evening with her mother, and then they returned home. It was indeed all right, and just as it should be. She had certainly eaten something that was not best for her, or she would not have dreamed three times about the house by the river. Under the assurance of a stable residence in one place Mrs. Arburton's spirits rose, and her health visibly improved. She resolved never to mention her absurd dream about the other house. She felt sure that it had never been built — and yet! Oh! she would not think about it any more. She would enjoy

the happy present in her lovely colonial villa in the fashionable quarter of the town.

Mr. Arburton never came home to lunch now. He started off very early every morning, and was always late to dinner. It was not in young Mrs. Arburton's nature to ignore this long.

"My love," she said one stormy night when he came home tired, cold, and hungry, "My love, if the other house is finished we might go there and stay till this stormy weather is over. I miss you dreadfully at lunch, and it's such a pity to let you travel so far in the rain."

"All right, my dear. It would be better to go back again."

"Back again!" Then it was not a dream.

The next morning young Mrs. Arburton was convinced that her mind was entirely unhinged. She did not dare to mention it to her husband. She went about her morning duties mechanically. They were in the lower town house. She knew the smell of the lumber yards only too well.

The thing was unbearable. She would settle the matter or perish in the attempt. The moment her husband had gone to his office she put on her things, took the trolley, and went up to the Heights. She found the avenue without the slightest difficulty. The colonial villa had totally disappeared. She asked a policeman if he had seen a white villa in the neighborhood. The man grinned broadly and said he guessed it was off duty.

She turned away indignant. What did the insolent creature mean? Nothing was to be gained by waiting there, and she took the trolley back home. On reaching the lower town she lost her way for the first time in her life. She wandered past several lumber yards, looking for that three-story house, and could not find it. Once she felt sure she had reached the spot — the house was not there. Thoroughly alarmed at what she regarded as her serious mental condition, she went at once to her husband's office.

"Mr. Arburton is here?"

"No, ma'am. He started to go up to the Heights on business, and said he should stay to lunch at his house."

That explained everything. The house by the lumber yards was simply a fancy of her disordered brain. She would go at

once to their villa-home on the Heights. On arriving there she was not able to find it. Now thoroughly alarmed, she decided to go to her mother's. Both her homes had disappeared, perhaps forever. She put her hand to her fevered brow. It was icy cold. She trembled as if chilled with terror.

"To think that beautiful home was all a wild fancy — to think I've lost that dear, homely, lovely, hideous house by the lumber yards. I fairly loved it. I'll never stir out of it again — not even to find that colonial villa. And my husband, too,— he may be a fancy — a mere phantom — "

She looked at her wedding ring.

"No. I suppose he is real — "

She stood silent and tearful, looking off over the vast prospect spread out below her. The avenue ended at the very edge of the bluff and gave a magnificent view over the river and valley below — the very view she had dreamed she saw from that chamber window —

Suddenly a picturesque chimney appeared above the edge of the bluff. Then two pretty finials of wrought iron. Then a red roof appeared. Was she dreaming — or — ? A number of people on the sidewalk stopped to view the remarkable spectacle. She heard a policeman remark aloud:

"The quare house is going on duty agin."

The colonial villa stood before her. The front door opened and her husband appeared.

"Lunch is ready, love. Come in as soon as you can, as I want to move back to the lower town."

"My dear! Am I crazy — ? "

"Guess not. Where have you been all this time? "

"But, love! " she cried, "is my mind unbalanced? "

"Guess not. You seem reasonable."

"Is this our uptown house? "

"Certainly, dear. Do come in to lunch."

"Then where is — the other house? "

"Right here. Do come into the house, dear. The elevator boy is in a hurry to move her back again, as he can't go to dinner till we are safe at the bottom of the hill."

Young Mrs. Arburton entered her uptown house and closed

the door. When in the privacy of her colonial dining-room she kissed her husband with enthusiasm.

"My love! It is distinctly great. How does it work?"

"Touch the button in the kitchen once, and the elevator boy will move her up. Touch twice and he will let her down again. You see, dear, I found it was not convenient to live in two houses at the same time, so I bought the old horse-car elevator and put a house in the car."

"But, my love — the colonial villa and the cheap three-story frame house."

"Oh! That's all right. The front is early colonial, the back is recent American, as befits the two landings on the elevator."

"How perfectly lovely. When I don't want to be at home to the people on the Heights I live below, and when I'm tired of the lumber yard people I'll live at the top."

"Yes. And when we don't want to see anybody, we can stop her half way. Come. Let's have lunch while she slides down."